DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 275 IR 016 262

AUTHOR	Wagner, Ellen D.
TITLE	New Directions for American Education: Implications for Continuing Educators.
INSTITUTION	Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Boulder, Colo.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Apr 93
CONTRACT	R117L10023
NOTE	10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National University Continuing Education Association (Nashville, TN, April 17, 1993). Sections adapted from "...And Learning for All Resource Directory: Model Programs and Practices Transforming American Education" by B. L. McCombs, J. V. King, and E. D. Wagner (Boulder, CO 1993).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Standards; Agenda Setting; *Continuing Education; Cultural Pluralism; Curriculum Development; Educational Assessment; *Educational Change; *Educational Objectives; Educational Technology; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; School Based Management; State Programs; Teacher Education; *Technological Advancement
IDENTIFIERS	*National Education Goals 1990; Performance Based Evaluation; *Reform Efforts; Teacher Empowerment; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

ABSTRACT

Issues and trends currently affecting the enterprise of education are identified, particularly as they relate to continuing education. To date, the national education reform agenda has featured the major components of national standards, a national curriculum, national tests, improved teacher training, and teacher empowerment combined with site-based management. The six national education goals define the conceptual parameters for a comprehensive educational reform agenda. Many educators recognize that, given the changing nature of what students need to know and do, traditional curricula and assessments are inadequate. A performance-based approach will address the needs of learners to have meaningful and relevant instructional experiences. Recommendations for transformed educational practice made by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education include: (1) an agenda for action at the state level; (2) commitment to greater collaboration in the public interest; (3) the pursuit of excellence in higher education; (4) creating a new environment for racial and ethnic diversity by fostering successful multicultural environments; (5) going beyond the traditional curriculum in technology use; and (6) faculty leadership toward education goals. Continuing educators are in an excellent position to facilitate educational reform by formulating strategies to meet the needs of the public. (Contains 11 references.) (SLD)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 363 275

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION:

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATORS

Ellen D. Wagner

**The University of Northern Colorado and
Western Cooperative for Educational
Telecommunications, WICHE**

A paper presented at the National University
Continuing Education Association Meeting

Nashville, Tennessee
April 17, 1993

IR016262

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

New Directions for American Education: Implications for Continuing Educators

Ellen D. Wagner
The University of Northern Colorado and
Western Cooperative for Educational
Telecommunications, WICHE

A paper presented at the National
University Continuing Education
Association Meeting,
Nashville, TN, April 17, 1993

(Author's note: Sections of this paper have been adapted from McCombs, B.L., King, J.V. and Wagner, E.D. (1993). **...And Learning for All Resource Directory: Model Programs and Practices Transforming American Education.** Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. The report was funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement under grant number R117L10023.)

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges currently faced by educators is having the ability to respond to the needs of the constituencies that they serve in ways which are meaningful, relevant and affordable. Just as society at large is confronting change in virtually every arena of activity, educators are confronting an array of changes which are transforming the ways in which America is "going to school". The purpose of this paper is to identify issues and trends which are currently affecting the enterprise of education. A discussion of the implications of these issues and trends may encourage continuing educators to consider formulating strategic imperatives for dealing with the evolving educational needs and interests of the American public.

Reforming American Education

American education is in an era of radical education reform -- basic ideas about teaching, learning and the whole enterprise of schooling are being challenged and transformed. There is widespread agreement that the existing system is not working. Some writers (e.g. Cuban , 1990; Eisner, 1991; Hutchins, 1990) suggest that the basic assumptions underlying the current K-12 public school system are fundamentally flawed. Higher education groups are recognizing that "regaining the public trust" is a strategic imperative which can no longer be ignored, especially during times when public sector expenditures are being closely scrutinized and calls for increased accountability abound.

McCombs, King & Wagner (1993) have noted that what has been called a crisis in education must also be viewed as a crisis in society. Government, manufacturing, healthcare, communications, commerce, and transportation industries conduct business in ways which look quite different than they did even just five years ago. The changes required to stay afloat in the current economy are calling for new visions of the future, and new strategies to effectively compete in a global market built upon information and services. Each and every industry is struggling to re-train, re-tool and restructure as they attempt to remain viable .

In changing times, a commitment in and to education is a necessity. The more each individual is able to contribute, the better our

ED 362162

society will be. The more our society improves, the better we will educate our citizens, bringing even greater rewards. Reaching this ideal calls for transformed views of how individuals learn, and the optimum conditions for supporting this process, conditions which are appropriate for all learners, from cradle to grave. We need to recognize that fundamental shifts in education will occur only when there are shifts in how people think about education – including their fundamental assumptions, their attitudes and their beliefs. Clearly, benchmarks for reform must be identified and systemic redesign strategies needed to work toward those benchmark must be established.

General Trends in Educational Reform

In considering the current debates and discussions about the quality (or lack thereof) of this country's educational system and the solutions for achieving "world class student outcomes" it is important to establish a sense of perspective. Ever since the first public schools were established in New England in the 1830s, schools have changed to meet the needs of a changing society. In the 1950s, for example, educators were forced to deal with the huge influx of "baby boom" students entering and moving through this country's school systems. At that same time, post-Sputnik reactions called for managing demands of this mass of students while emphasizing and integrating a more technical curriculum. In response, the educational system was designed from the perspective of an administrator, and a top-down, military/industrial management model emphasizing cost and training efficiency became the norm. In the 1960s, when social upheaval became the focal point for change, schools became the testing ground for Federal regulations. The move was to centralize staff and streamline curricula so that all students would be assured of the same basic education. New instruction and curriculum models produced measurable, reliable outcomes driven by behavioral objectives.

To date, the national education reform agenda of the 1990s has featured the major components of national standards, a national curriculum, national tests, improved teacher training and teacher empowerment combined with site-based management. The six national education goals, specified by the National Governor's Association in 1989 and affirmed by former President George Bush in 1990 have helped to focus attention on a broad-based concern for learners of all ages, whether learning is to occur within the traditional parameters of K-12 education, in early childhood or across the life span. Discipline and domain-specific organizations are developing standards to define competence among their practitioners.

There are currently activities at the Federal level which give testimony that these goals, standards and guidelines have captured more than just passing interest of the current

administration. For example, one bill currently before the Congress looks to tie a state's eligibility for federal education funding to its ability to demonstrate their plan for reaching the education goals, while the Department of Labor is examining the feasibility of developing "employability tests" to certify for prospective employers that high school (and other) graduates have attained a measurable level of competence (Hutchins, 1993).

National Education Goals

The six national education goals define the conceptual parameters for a comprehensive educational reform agenda:

Goal 1: School Readiness. By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn, including all disadvantaged and disabled children, and including those children yet to be born, by attention to enhanced prenatal health systems.

Goal 2: School Completion. By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%, with a focus on eliminating the gap in high school graduation rates between American students from minority background and their non-minority counterparts.

Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship. By the year 2000, American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment in our modern economy.

Goal 4: Mathematics and Science. By the year 2000, American students will be the first in the world in mathematics and science achievements, with an increase by 50% in teachers with a substantive background in mathematics and science, and a significant increase in the number of undergraduate and graduate students (especially women and minorities) who complete degrees in mathematics, science and engineering.

Goal 5: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning. By the year 2000 every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, with a significant increase in the number of minorities who enter and complete college, and with the involvement of every major American business in strengthening the connection between education and work.

Goal 6: Safe, Disciplines and Drug Free Schools. By the year 2000 every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and

will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning; and parents, businesses and community organizations will work together to ensure that schools are a safe haven for children.

While the national education goals provide a sense of purpose, they simply identify directions in which reformers can move. They do not provide strategies through which the goals are to be accomplished. Instead, the operationalization of the national goals appears through principles, guidelines and standards arising from discipline specific sources.

National Standards and Guidelines

Fundamental research-based principles for guiding school redesign and transformed educational practices are emerging from a variety of sources. Once such source comes from the new emerging standards for knowledge in disciplines such as science and mathematics (e.g. the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989; the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1990). Another source is a set of learner centered psychological principles (McCombs et al, 1993) which integrate psychology's accumulated knowledge base and its implications for learning, instruction, curriculum assessment and other major arenas of school reform. These principles are based upon the assumption that improvements in educational practice will occur only when the system is redesigned with the primary focus on the learner. A learner centered program is one in which the learner, no matter what age, is actively involved in the planning and evaluation processes as well as the learning process. The learner's perspective is taken into account and educational experiences are designed to meet the needs of the whole person. Specific components of a learner centered program are personal choice and responsibility; personal relevance, inclusiveness, being developmentally appropriate and being concerned with the whole person.

Performance Based Education: Assessment for the 1990s:

Not surprisingly, McCombs (1993) has noted that, given the changing nature of what students will need to know and be able to do, traditional curricula and assessments are inadequate. She has suggested that a performance based approach to curriculum and assessment will address needs of learners to have instructional experiences that are personally meaningful and relevant and which allow them to be more actively involved in and responsible for their own learning. To this end, alternative curricula and assessment methods-- called "performance based" or "authentic" -- are being developed. Marzano (1991) has suggested that such alternative educational experiences and the assessment methods derived therefrom include such features as being student directed; personally, socially and domain relevant; production/ activity oriented, where new knowledge is generated;

oriented toward utilizing a variety of cognitive operations; are non-routine; are not bound by traditional time structures; and are conducive to cooperative or collaborative work.

Where Higher Education is Headed

Calls for transformed educational practice at K-12 levels have clear and direct implications for higher education. In nothing else, the public educational funding needed to address K-12 educational reform efforts may mean less direct funding for higher education. The calls for K-12 reform demand that pre-service teacher education programs address the proposed content standards and new assessment competencies; they also demand that professional development opportunities for in-service teachers be constructed to address these same concerns. Furthermore, the holistic orientation of new paradigms of school reform place greater emphasis upon new models of health care provision, social service provision, domain/ content specific redirections and new approaches toward management which promote continuous improvement and addressing expressed client needs. Each of these arenas provide new opportunities for continuing educators for program development and instructional delivery.

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's Office of Research and Policy Analysis recently completed a two year project entitled **Higher Education and the Economy of the West.** In their 1992 policy recommendations, WICHE staff noted that "Higher education must prepare to meet aggressively the challenges posed by rapid changes in the economic structure and character in our society. WICHE believes that the following recommendations must be implemented if these challenges are to be met:

I. *An Agenda for Action:* State must develop a statewide vision for higher education, The vision should be embodied in a strategic agenda that signals a new statewide perspective for higher education. Campus roles and missions, funding policies and priorities and accountability requirements should be consistent with the goals of the strategic agenda

II. *In the Public Interest:* State legislators and campus leaders must make a commitment to greater collaboration among higher education, the public sector, state government and the private sector. State legislators and campus leaders must provide incentives and rewards for collaborative activity.

III. *In Pursuit of Excellence:* Higher education must make a stronger commitment to undergraduate curriculum reform. Reform efforts must include changes that are critical to preparing graduates for the emerging and technologically oriented economy and multicultural society.

- faculty must engage students as active participants in lifelong learning. Colleges and universities must emphasize a rigorous and integrated curriculum that blends liberal arts with vocational, technical and professional education.

- The global economy requires that institutions infuse an international perspective into their curricula.

- Higher education must be responsible to the educational needs of its new clientele: lifelong learners, placebound students, part-time students, working adults, re-entry adults, individuals in rural communities, and members of under-represented racial and ethnic groups.

IV. *Creating a New Environment:* Colleges and universities have a responsibility to take a leadership role in demonstrating that racial and ethnic diversity is an institutional, societal and economic asset by fostering successful multicultural environments. Campuses must develop and implement strategic plans for diversity and demonstrate progress in meeting those goals.

V. *Beyond the Traditional Classroom:* Efficient and effective use of technology for instruction, educational delivery, research facilitation and campus management must become a state priority. States and institutions should develop strategic long-term plans and provide funding for the use of new education technologies. Barriers to the increased use of technology, including disincentives created by traditional faculty reward and promotion policies and state funding formulas must be removed. Higher education must demonstrate progress in meeting these goals.

VI. *Faculty Roles:* The global economy places new demands upon higher education, and this requires a renegotiation of faculty roles. Faculty must make a commitment to addressing the goals of the new higher education agenda, and institutional leaders must provide a policy and work environment that encourages the commitment and participation. Higher education must demonstrate that faculty assignments and responsibilities are consistent with campus roles and missions and support the goals of the strategic agenda." (WICHE, 1992, xiii-xv)

Implications of the Reform Agenda for Educational Practice

The general educational trends represented by the goals, recommendations, standards and guidelines noted in the preceding paragraphs are having significant impact upon the environment in which the entire enterprise of education occurs. Their potential impact upon continuing educators

appear to come from two general directions:

"As higher education goes, so goes continuing education". It would be naive to assume that continuing education units will escape the current efforts to reform, restructure or reorganize higher education unaffected. These changes may represent opportunities for continuing educators to function as increasingly significant players in the current reform agenda. This will have its most notable, direct impact in the applications of new technologies to extend beyond the traditional classroom, and in continuing efforts to reach out to "lifelong learners of all ages, placebound students, part-time students, working adults, re-entry adults, individuals in rural communities, and members of under-represented racial and ethnic groups."

Serving the needs of life-long learners. The national education goals and the various standards and assessment guidelines encompass arenas of service provision which can be ably addressed by the continuing education community through an array of instructional opportunities, delivered through a variety of means. As a case in point, the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory recently (March, 1993) asked focus groups of teachers about the types of challenges they currently face in their classrooms, and what they needed to meet those challenges. Almost without exception, these teachers noted that they it was impossible for them to meet the demands of integrating learner centered teaching methods, alternative assessment methods, strategies for dealing with the needs of diverse students and methods for making better use of technologies in their classrooms unless they were provided with guidance in how to do so. As staff development offices feel the crunch of budget shortfall and are unable to meet the ongoing professional education needs of their teachers, continuing education providers are well positioned to provide in-service opportunities. They may also be able to play a critical role in providing for the ongoing professional development of college faculty invovled in pre-service educational programs , to provide access to reformed model practices to be infused in pre-service educational programs.

Conclusion

It is clear the challenges of dealing with a changing society is a shared responsibility of all citizens. It is also clear that for all citizens to participate, it will require improved access to educational and informational experiences. Continuing educators are in an excellent position to facilitate such efforts by formulating strategic imperatives for dealing with the evolving educational needs and interests of the American public.

References

American Association for the Advancement of Science (1990). **Sourcebook for Science, Mathematics and Technology Education, 1990-1991.** Washington, DC: AAAS.

Cuban, L. (1990). Reforming, again, again, and again. **Educational Researcher,** 19(10), 3-13.

Eisner, E.W. (1991). What really counts in schools. **Educational Leadership,** 48(3), 10-17.

Hutchins, C.L. (1993). Personal communication, Aurora, CO.

Hutchins, C.L. (1990). Changing society spells school redesign. **Noteworthy: National Education Goals.** Aurora, CO: Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory.

Marzano, R. (1991). Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship. in **Noteworthy: National Education Goals**. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory.

McCombs, B.L. (1993). Unpublished working paper, Performance Based Education.

McCombs, B.L. et al (1993). **Learner Centered Psychological Principles: Guidelines for School Redesign and Reform.** Washington, DC: American Psychological Association and the Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory.

McCombs, B.L., King, J.V. and Wagner, E.D. (1993). **...And Learning for All Resource Directory: Model Programs and Practices Transforming American Education.** Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989. **Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics.** Reston, VA: NCTM.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (1992). **Meeting Economic and Social Challenges: A Strategic Agenda for Higher Education.** Boulder, CO: WICHE.